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LETTERS

ON

CANADIAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY

ALEXANDER MILTON ROSS.

TORONTO, C. W.

1865.

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Toronto, April 21st, 1865.

To the Editor of the Irish Canadian :

SIR,—It must somewhat puzzle Americans to comprehend the prevalent fear that exists in England of a war with America. The recent speeches in the English Parliament upon the defence of Canada plainly evince that such fears do exist to a great extent. The Ministers of the Crown declare that the relations of the two Countries are amicable, and immediately after vote £50,000 for Canadian defences, and maintain the necessity of expending further immense sums to place our frontier in a condition of defence. The question naturally arises, against what enemy are these preparations needed, if not the United States?

There is no sane man in Canada will believe that the United States have any hostile designs upon this Province with a view to forcible annexation. The only danger is that a quarrel may arise between the Cabinets of London and Washington—a quarrel in which Canada may have no interest whatever—which may result in war. In that case, our Province would be made the battle-ground; our quiet towns and Cities, our peaceful and happy homes will be made the scene of desolation and sorrow. I would ask, is our connexion with Britain worth these sacrifices, which we would most surely have to endure, in the event of a war between England and America. Canada, from her position, would be called upon to make a sacrifice of her peace, her property, and the lives of her people; while England, at a distance of 3,000 miles from the scene of conflict, would be exempt from all these dangers. Every intelligent man in Canada must feel convinced of the results which

would follow a struggle so unequal as a war between Canada and the United States—for we would certainly have to bear the brunt of the conflict—how impotent would be our efforts against the gigantic military power and resources of our neighbors, who would have no difficulty in throwing 300,000 veteran soldiers upon our borders, and our beautiful country would soon become a barren waste, like Virginia.

In view of the danger that menaces us (from our connexion with England) it behoves every true Canadian to consider whether the best interests of the Province would not be furthered by a dissolution of the tie that binds us to Britain, instead of wasting precious time in going through the tedious process of Confederation.

Why not become independent at once, and thus ensure for our land peace, and the proud and enviable position of a distinct nationality? England, we are led to understand from the repeated declarations of her leading statesmen, will offer no objection whenever Canada may desire a separation. Such being the case, is it not better to separate at once amicably, than to do so at some future time, perhaps after we have been called upon to endure much suffering and disaster—in a contest of no interest to us?

As an independent nation we could occupy a position of neutrality in the event of a war between England and the United States, and our country would not have to suffer the horrors of war.

I remain, &c., A. M. Ross.

Toronto, May 15, 1865.

Sir,—The Slaveholder's rebellion is crushed, and the victorious armies of the North are being quietly

disbanded, and Canada is not to be invaded by the legions of Grant and Sherman—which the English prophets declared would be the certain result of Federal success. At no period since the outbreak of the rebellion now closed has there been a more cordial and friendly feeling existing in the United States towards Canada than at the present time.

Despite the sneers and secret hostility of the English aristocracy, and the nobility of Europe, the American people have succeeded in crushing the most formidable and unjustifiable rebellion the world ever saw, and have established their Government upon the firm and enduring basis of human freedom. The United States have never evinced a desire to interfere with our affairs, or coerce us into annexation. On the other hand, they express the wish to live upon friendly terms, and leave us to manage our own affairs in our own way. And yet, Canadians, we are urged to erect barriers against our American friends, for the purpose, we suppose, of keeping out Republican principles and ideas, as well as to maintain our present condition of stagnation in trade and enterprise—the usual blessings enjoyed alike by every British colony on this continent. And we are told it is necessary to erect expensive fortifications along our borders, that we may continue in possession of those benefits which we derive from our connexion with England. I hope the Canadian people will not permit themselves to be frightened or cajoled into a belief that these fortifications are necessary to our peace and safety. There cannot possibly be any cause for war between the United States and Canada. If the British Government feel inclined to go to war with the Americans, it is certainly no affair of ours. Let her fight it out—but not on the soil of Canada.

The English papers inform us, that a corps of

engineers are already on their way to Canada to make preparations for the erection of defensive works at Quebec, Montreal, and elsewhere; and our people should at once determine that not one dollar shall be extracted from Canada to build these worse than useless fortifications. Canada has already been sufficiently cursed with unprincipled politicians and needy English contractors. What our people want is to be left to manage our own affairs as we may see fit. We are told by English newspapers and English statesmen that unless we tax ourselves millions of dollars for these fortifications, that England will withdraw her protection. Let her do so. That is just what Canada needs—what every British colony needs—what Ireland needs. Poor Ireland! that has been impoverished, and is being fast depopulated by English protection. It is English protection that checks our growth, impedes our progress; that causes Canada to stand still, while all around is life, enterprise and advancement—that forces thousands of our young men to seek a livelihood elsewhere that is denied them here. Our people should at once arouse themselves, and frustrate the designs of the political demagogues now in England who are scheming to bind fresh burthens upon our country.

I remain, &c., A. M. Ross.

Toronto, June 1st, 1865.

SIR,—The Confederation scheme having failed, as it deserved, it now becomes a question of the most vital interest to the people of this province, whether the best interests of the country would not be greatly advanced by a separation from England. Our present position as a dependency of the British Crown is one fraught with much danger to the peace and prosperity of Canada.

Between two great rival nations, like America and Britain, there is always more or less danger of a rupture of peaceful relations, oftentimes from the most unlooked for causes. We can well remember the dread and anxiety which prevailed throughout the country at the prospect of a war about the Mason and Slidell difficulty—a matter in which Canadians had not the least interest. Nothing saved us from the ravages of war at that time but that the United States were engaged in a struggle for their very existence with the slaveholders.

There are other reasons beside that of security from war that renders a separation from England desirable, the principal of which is—that our position as a separate nationality would conduce to our prosperity and growth. As long as we remain a dependency of a Monarchical government, we shall not attract foreign emigration to this country; the emigrants from Ireland, England and Germany, are not likely after leaving their homes of poverty under that form of government in Europe, to voluntarily place themselves again under the same institutions. Thus it is, that of the thousands that leave Ireland and England yearly, how very few come to Canada, notwithstanding our soil and climate is quite as favourable for all purposes as any in the Northern or Western States. They pass us by, and settle in the neighbouring republic. Even during the four years of terrible war that has raged in the United States, the tide of emigration has continued to flow; and although the war has carried off hundreds of thousands, the population of the Union is greater than when the war began, the emigrants preferring to settle under a republican government, and share the present burthen of taxation in the United States.

It is futile in us to expect any increase to our

population from foreign emigration, so long as we remain a British Province. The people of Ireland and England who are seeking homes in the New World, have already experienced the exclusive and selfish policy of the English Government and Aristocracy, and will prefer to cast their lot in a country where every man can exert an influence in public affairs, where every man is a sovereign.

During the summer thousands of emigrants from Europe pass through this Province, and they cannot fail to observe the lack of enterprise and improvement, and the little inducement offered them to remain in this country. In fact hundreds of young Canadians, the bone and sinew of our country, are emigrating to the neighbouring republic; and many Canadian families yearly remove from their old homes in Canada, preferring to live under a Government that offers every inducement to the agricultural and labouring classes, while our Government permits none, but rich speculators and favourites, to obtain the best portion of our land. Although the line that divides us from the United States is merely nominal, the difference in progress, spirit and enterprise is immediately observable upon entering the republic; the reason for this marked difference in the progress of the two countries can be traced to the different institutions under which we live, and we need not look for any improvement in our condition while we remain a Province of England.

It is the duty and interest of our people to obtain a separation from Britain, and thus secure for our country peace, prosperity, and the power to frame our institutions in conformity with the spirit and progress of the present age.

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,
ALEXANDER M. ROSS.

Toronto, 4th April, 1865.

TO THE PEOPLE OF CANADA:

The question is frequently asked me by American friends, "Why is there so much sympathy in Canada for the Slaveholders' Rebellion?" And surprise is evinced, that the people of Canada should display so much regard and solicitude for the success of Southern rebels, who are endeavoring to overthrow the only truly Republican Government on earth, and establish upon its ruins an edifice,

"With one great bloodstone for its mighty base."

I have been unable to satisfactorily reply to the question, and turn to you Canadians for the answer. You boast that under the flag of Britain there breathes no slave; and yet, judging from the warm sympathy you display for the Southern rebels, you are quite willing that the chains of Slavery should be riveted upon four millions of innocent men, women, and children.

The fact cannot be denied, that a large portion of our people fully sympathize with, and hesitate not to give aid and comfort to, the Slaveholders' Rebellion. This fact will form a most mortifying page in the history of Canada—that while a neighbouring and friendly people were struggling to crush a most wicked and unjust rebellion, and purge their country from the accursed system of Slavery planted by your own ancestors upon their soil, that you have gloried over every temporary success of the Southern rebels in their infamous design to build up a slave empire upon this Continent.

There can be no doubt that the nobility and aristocracy of England desire a disruption of the Union, and the consequent overthrow of republican institutions, but why Canadians should, is certainly a matter of surprise.

For two years after the outbreak of the rebellion, the efforts of the North were ridiculed, and it was declared impossible to put the rebellion down; and every abuse was heaped upon the Northern people, for attempting to maintain the integrity of the Union by force of arms. Every report of Southern triumph was hailed with joy, and magnified tenfold; and every trifling disaster to the Northern cause was offered as proof of the inability of the Northerners to cope with the gallant and chivalric Southerners.

There is no outspoken friend of the North in Canada, but what has had to bear not only the insults of petted Southern refugees, but of Canadian Sympathizers as well; and wherever it has been possible to persecute, the friends of the North have been persecuted and reviled. The vindictive and cruel persecution of the noble Giddings, will make the cheeks of your posterity blush with shame, when they read the record of the outrage perpetrated upon that fearless apostle of freedom.

More recently, your sympathies have been excited in behalf of the Southern thieves and pirates who infest Canada, making it their base of operations against a people who are at peace with us. These Southern scoundrels have been aided and comforted in their wicked designs; and when brought before our courts, charged with the commission of crimes—committed upon our confiding neighbours—have been illegally discharged by our judges, and applauded by our populace; that this has occurred, and in the metropolis of our country, cannot be denied: and in all our large towns and cities, the discharge of the Southern thieves and marauders has been approved; and with but few exceptions, the press of Canada is in accord with the decisions of our Coursols and Smiths.

Canadians, is it possible you have considered the consequences that would follow the establishment of a Slave Empire upon this continent? Is it possible that you would delight in seeing a Government erected upon the distinct foundation of human Slavery?

Is it possible that you can close your ears to the wail of woe and agony that would arise from a thousand humble cabins in the Slave States, if the slaveholders' rebellion was successful? Have you closed

your eyes and hardened your hearts toward the thousands of refugees from Slavery in our very midst, who carry the marks of the slaveholder's whip and branding-iron upon their bodies? If not, why do you evince so much anxiety for the success of this wicked rebellion?

The day is not very distant, when you will deeply deplore the course you have pursued in striking hands with Southern thieves and pirates, and aiding by your active sympathy to enslave an innocent people.

Thank God, notwithstanding the comfort you have given, and the solicitude you have shown, the wicked rebellion is going down, and with it the most foul and barbarous institution the world ever saw will be blotted out for ever!

Your humble Servant,

ALEXANDER M. ROSS.